

Gender Referred by Historical Movement of Gender Equality and Poem

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Abstract

The concept gender is explained by three sub topics. Firstly, explanation of gender. Secondly, the concept explained by the poem "I am not that women ". To crown all this History of movement for gender equality is explained. "Gender "is a socio-cultural term referring to socially defined roles and behaviors assigned to male and female in a given society. Gender Inequality, in simple words, may be defined as discrimination against women based on their sex. In order, the term 'sex ' is a biological and physiological phenomenon which defines men and women. Gender is a function of relationship were men are superior to women. The poem "I am not that women" by krishwar Naheed explains the whole concept of women who faces many difficulty in her life by gender inequality. Gender inequality is idea and situation that women and men are not equal, it regards to unequal handling or treating of individuals entirely or partly due to their gender. Therefore, it is an intellectual, political, social, economic history of the changing relationship between men and women.

Keywords

- Stoicism and Platonic misogyny
- Hellenic philosophy
- Protofeminism
- Custom and tradition

Introduction

Gender' is a socio-cultural term referring socially defined roles and behaviors assigned to 'males' and 'females' in a given society; whereas, the term 'sex' is a biological and physiological phenomenon which defines man and woman. In its social, historical and cultural aspects, gender is a function of power relationship between men and women where men are considered superior to women. Therefore, gender may be understood as a man-made concept, while 'sex' is natural or biological characteristics of human beings. Each of these aspects play a significant part when speaking of the different social problems encountered by men and women. Sex makes up the biological differences; of male or female. Gender is the socially learned behaviors that are attached to the sexes, which create "Gender Roles."

Gender roles constitute the attitudes and behaviors that are expected of males and females in a given culture of society. It is these gender roles that give the impact of gender inequality amongst the male and the female sex. Gender roles are not given at birth, as one's biological sex, they are to be learned and taught amongst those surrounding one at an early age, and the society and culture one lives in. Gender roles are mainly learned and taught by those who have raised them, namely their family. One's family has the biggest impact on how to perceive their gender. This is because a family institution passes on values and beliefs that are taught and learned to accept at an early age. Although it is not those who raise one whom are to blame for gender inequality. Gender inequality begins during the history of how evolution caused us to be segregated of the two groups of male and female. As an outcome of these, gender roles came to affect of gender inequalities, in Family households and in the Workplace. As my research hopes to show, that I believe gender inequalities are learned through one's family and are reflected in the workplace.

History of the Movement for Gender Equality

The concept of equality of the sexes is a relatively new phenomenon. Until the end of the nineteenth century, women were treated as the inferior sex and were excluded from taking part in public life, especially in areas pertaining to politics, education and certain professions. Resistance to the idea of gender equality drew its strength from Stoic and Platonic misogyny, which was reinforced and justified under different intellectual movements, from early Christianity through to the Enlightenment. The history of the movement for gender equality is therefore an intellectual, political, social and economic history of the changing relationship between men and women, rather than how it is often distortedly represented as a 'pro-woman' movement.

Legacy of Ancient Misogyny

Women have historically been associated with inferiority in philosophical, medical and religious traditions. Hellenic philosophical schools, such as Stoicism and Platonism distrusted all that was corporal, favoring instead the spiritual. The hierarchical dichotomy of body versus soul/intellect was seen to parallel the division of the sexes, with women, due to their childbearing functions and menarche, pejoratively associated with corporeality. The mistrust of the flesh extended to mistrust of sexuality; a common antifeminist trope that developed over centuries was the idea of the woman as temptress, someone who tempts the virtuous male from the true ascetic path to wisdom.

With the advent of Christianity, the Old Testament figure of Eve came to embody earlier misogynist traditions: Eve, the sinful Woman (Woman because she in fact represents all women) who condemned humanity by corrupting Adam. Moreover, since Eve was born out of Adam's rib, the link between Woman's physicality and debt to Man was made more manifest. Even in medical treatises of the first five centuries AD, women's inferiority to men was justified by their physiological weaknesses. In Aristotelian physiological tradition, which influenced medieval, early modern and even modern notions of sex and gender,

Woman is the imperfect version of Man: she is matter whereas he is form. For the Greek philosopher and medical doctor, Galen (AD129 – 200), women lacked self-restraint whereas men were characterized by self-control. These traditions intersected and justified the dominant view that women were physiologically, intellectually and spiritually inferior to men.

Protofeminism

Despite the dominance of these misogynist traditions, some individuals during the Middle Ages and early modern period challenged the status quo and called for greater equality between the sexes. Christine de Pisan (d. 1430), a successful Italian-born female writer of the French royal court is now often named as “the first proto-modern woman” due to her treatise panegyricizing the contributions of women to civilization, in her famous works, *The Book of the Cities of Ladies*. For Christine, gender inequality was not on account of any innate differences between men and women. Instead, she recognized the role of education and opportunities as the main cause: “If it were the period challenged the status quo and called for greater equality between the sexes, to send little girls to school and teach them all sorts of different subjects there, as one does with little boys, they would grasp and learn the difficulties of all the arts and sciences just as easily as the boys.”

Christine comprehensively critiques the tradition of misogyny underpinning literary, religious and philosophical discourses while at the same time reconstructing a ‘new’ canon of literature and history in which the contributions of women are included and applauded. There remains considerable debate on the merits of the label ‘protofeminist’, in particular as it applied to Christine de Pisan. Many contemporary feminist historians find her ‘disappointing’ for not being more ‘radical’ yet (Delaney, 1987), others have argued that by her life example (self-educated, supporting herself and her family through her writing, publicly engaging with contemporary debates) and by her arguments for greater appreciation, better treatment and equal access to education for women, she embodied and espoused one of the earliest formulations of gender equality.

“I am not that woman “

The poem I am not that woman which was written by Kishwar Naheed who explained about women’s inequality in this poem

Stanza:

I am the one you crushed
With the weight of custom and tradition
Not knowing
That light cannot be hidden in darkness
Remember me,
I am the one in whose lap
You picked flowers
And planted thorns and embers
Not knowing That chains cannot smother my fragrance

Analysis

The woman who has been crushed by the rigid constraints of custom and irrational barriers of tradition. Nevertheless, light cannot be hidden in darkness and manifest itself. A woman is the epitome of light (knowledge) As the saying goes: “If a man is educated, an individual is educated but if a woman is educated, the whole family is educated.” She is the lap that ensures security, caring and sharing. The Man takes flowers from her only to leave her thorns and embers rendering life a horrid experience for her. The idea of ‘embers’ implies how she endures hell right on earth. However, Man is ignorant to the fact that chains cannot smother her fragrance, as it is beyond worldly confinement.

Tangible objects cannot deteriorate her intangible worth.

In short

A number of laws have been enacted to provide protection against discrimination to women. But the implementation of this laws is hardly there in their letter and spirit. The sense of helplessness, Insecurity and humiliation in women always keep them silent. To totally eradicate the gender discrimination or gender inequality the cultural beliefs and traditions that discriminate against women should be discredited officially and the implementation of the related laws should be made severe.

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